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CYPRESS LAKE AND DISPLAY GARDEN — This area, once used as a pig pen and feeding area for pigs, now has growing in it not only one of the best stands of native Cypress trees and other woody swamp trees and herbaceous plants, but it is a display garden for some of the finer Louisiana native irises. Plans call for making Cypress Lake the one spot in the state where every variety of woody swamp plant and many of the herbaceous swamp plants may be seen growing. To further enhance the natural beauty of the area, a park on the banks of Cypress Lake is now being formed.

USL's Cypress Lake: Spot No Longer Ugly Duckling

by Mario Mamalakis

Were a story to be written about U.S.L.'s Cypress Lake, a theme like that of "The Ugly Duckling" would be most suitable. Now one of the more charming and lovely spots in Louisiana and soon to be the only natural swamp where all varieties of woody swamp plants and most of the herbaceous swamp plants may be seen growing in one spot, Cypress Lake was, nevertheless, once a pig pen.

In the years right after World War I, the U.S.L. farm was in the area where the present girls' dormitories are. The barn was where the band house is now located, and the Cypress Lake area was fenced in for use as a pig pen and feeding area!

Actually, if they could talk, the majestic moss -draped Cypress could take us even further back in time. They could tell us, perhaps, that once when the buffalo roamed the present campus and the Indians reigned supreme, the Attakapas prairies were covered with a lush growth that was like a sea of grass broken at intervals by patches of trees that came to be called "islands."

When the wind frolicked in the thick growth of grasses, the prairies look as though they were a mass of restless waves pulled by the tide. The early settlers called this grass "gazon".

The lovely Cypress might say, too, that once the ground where now they stand so tall, reaching towards the skies, was not always the sunken area it is now. It was different, when first they shot up from the rich soil and grew tall and finally strong enough to survive the natural hazards of a forest primeval.

Then they might tell of the exciting times, when the Buffalo herds roamed the campus and the Buffalo bulls fought it out beneath their branches. As they pounded the turf and shook the sturdy Cypress trees, something had to give way. It was not they, but rather the swampy ground that showed the effects of these mighty struggles.

These depressions left by the fighting buffalos were quickly found by the rivulets of rain and soon a pond was formed that came to be called "bull holes" or "Trous de Taureau," as the Acadians referred to them.

"The size and shape of Cypress Lake indicates that it may have been a buffalo hole or wallow," Ira Nelson, professor of Horticulture at USL, said.

The "bull holes" that dot the Attakapas area were put to good use by the early settlers. They planted rice in them and harvested it as it was needed, by cutting the rice with a sickle and flail and then hulling the grain in wooden mortars and pestles acquired from the Indians.

"It could also be," Dr. S. L. Solymosy, U.S.L. superintendent of grounds and associate professor of Horticultural Research, said, "that this whole area was under water at one time, and, as it was settled, it was drained into the Vermilion River."

When the old dairy farm area was purchased, the farm was moved off the main campus and put out at the newly acquired property. This was shortly after World War I, according to President Joel L. Fletcher, who was on the faculty of the Agricultural College in the early twenties.

"I had the pigs and the barn moved, drained the area and beautified it," Fletcher said.

What was once a pig pen became known as Cypress Grove. President Fletcher recalled that it was then used as an open air theatre where travelling Shakespearian troupes like the Ben Greet Players performed. Dance classes of the college also gave performances here and commencement exercises were also held at the lovely spot.

In the early forties," Fletcher added, "members of the Agricultural faculty felt that water should be placed back as lack of it might prove harmful to the Cypress."

Dean T. J. Arceneaux stated that another reason for bringing water back into the area at that particular time was, because it was thought that during these war years there should be a reservoir of water.

A pump was set up; water was pumped back and the area then became known as "Cypress Lake." Dean Arceneaux emphasized that it is really a natural Louisiana swamp area and that long range plans call for placing in it (so that there would be growing in one spot) all of the woody plants and many of the herbaceous plants found in Louisiana swamp areas. At the present time, he pointed out, it is necessary to travel about the state to find all the different varieties of swamp growth.

The natural beauty of the area with its moss - draped Cypress trees was accentuated, when the Mary Swords Debaillon Louisiana native Iris collection was planted in Cypress Lake. Later the Society for Louisiana Irises used it as a test garden. The American Iris Society also sanctioned Cypress Lake for use as a test garden, and it was at this time that all Iris to be considered for awards had to be grown here.

"This was not a workable plan," Nelson said, "and in 1955 Cypress Lake was discontinued as an official test garden for Louisiana Irises."

However, some of the more beautiful and fine Louisiana native Iris are still found growing in the lake on the USL campus, and it is still maintained by the Society for Louisiana Irises as a display garden. In addition many other swamp plants and trees may be seen here.

Among these, according to Solymosy, who is constantly seeking out more swamp plantings for the lake, are Sweet Bay, Red Day, Red Maple, Carolina Ash, Dahoon, Palmetto, Palmetto - with-a trunk, Adelia, Sweetspire, American Sweet Olive, water Tupelo, Titi, Buttonbush, Spider Lillies, Powdered Thalia, Wild Rice, Climbing Fern and Wild Azalea.

To further enhance the beauty of Cypress Lake and its immediate surroundings, Solymosy is now in process of making an attractive park on the banks of the lake nearest Hebrard Boulevard.

The "Ugly Duckling" becam a beautiful swan and a pig pe is now a lovely Cypress Lak and display garden for rar swamp trees and plants.

"In fact," Arceneaux pointe out, "our entire campus is a 'in-use arboretum', the only on in the state, for our trees an plants are there for beauty an for the education of our st dents, as well as the gener public, since all plants and tree are labelled."

Cub Pack Formed At Boucher School

Cut Scout Pack 445 has bee organized at Alice N. Bouche School.

Cubmaster will be Norma Melancon, while den mother appointed are Mmes. Mario Schexnayder, Loveless Vincen Wesley Lewis, Dudley Breaux Carroll LeBlanc.

Others working on the com mittee are Henry Landry, Ha old Trahan, Carroll LeBlan Francis Spellman, Dudle Breaux, Adam Duhon, Ma colm Dartez, L. E. Olivie Norman Melancon, John Ma thieu, J. W. Casida, and E Jordan.

St. Martin USL Alumni Elect Braud

Alumni of the University Southwestern Louisiana of S Martin Parish elected Nol Braud, St. Martinville, as pre ident of the group for 1963-64.

Other officers elected to ser the Association are Harr Champagne, vice - president a Miss Inez Gauthier, secretar both from St. Martinville.

The election took place We nesday, October 9, at the Martinville High School, wi President Joel L. Fletcher, De of Men Glynn Abel and Coa Whitey Urban as guests fro USL.

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